

## Career Path

### Taking that logical step

by Charles Mak



Cally Chan, general manager, HP services, technology solutions group

Hewlett-Packard HK SAR Limited

Photo: Edde Ngan

Cally Chan believes every step she has taken has formed part of a chain of logic. "I loved maths so much that I entered the science stream at high school before taking up computer studies at university. In my generation, there weren't many career options so instead of becoming a teacher I chose to join a sizeable IT vendor after graduating from the University of Hong Kong in 1990, a time when the industry was sizzling and IT jobs were hot," she recalls.

Ms Chan now leads HP services, a business segment of the technology solutions group Hewlett-Packard HK SAR Limited. HP services provide industry-leading knowledge and technologies to customers and delivers end-to-end solutions across the entire IT lifecycle. It comprises three business units: consulting & integration, outsourcing services and technology services.

She began her career at HP as a response centre engineer. "Customers who purchased our support services would call in for assistance and we offered solutions or arranged site visits when necessary," she says, stressing that this was excellent on-the-job training. "The response centre was a bit like a Shaolin temple. We had to act swiftly on technical enquiries on a daily basis.

The environment helped me build a strong technical competence and customer service skills."

Ms Chan is also grateful for the job rotation opportunities offered by the company, which enabled her to take up increased responsibilities in the consulting & integration organisation in three years. She was then transferred to HP outsourcing services, where she spent a good 10 years in various consulting and management positions both in mainland China and Hong Kong. Subsequently, she was promoted to the organisation's general manager, followed two months ago by the promotion to general manager of HP services.

**"Go the extra mile and don't become too comfortable in one place"**

"Whatever the position and rank, a customer-service mindset is important because there are sales elements in every job," Ms Chan says.

She points out that the most important thing is to develop a keen customer focus, which means finding out what customers want and to step into their shoes and provide them with the best available solutions. The secret, she discloses, is to observe why and how people do certain things so that you can better understand and concentrate on meeting their needs.

### Time management

Ms Chan's 12-hour daily work schedule starts at 8am, with a daily focus on tasks falling into four major categories:



## Executive wisdom

In the IT business, constant development is crucial and Ms Chan has just completed an EMBA programme at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Apart from academic studies, she believes that the best way to learn about the industry is from end-users — her clients and industry counterparts. "New acquaintances can give you new insights and inspiration," she says.

Opportunities to take part in forums and workshops where key industry figures and experts share their experiences and best practice also help her learn not only about the industry but also hone softer skills such as people management and leadership. These are in sync with her firm belief that "service is all about people".

She says, "To run a business, you must have people, process and technologies. We are a multinational company and have an advantage because we can leverage our global strengths and intellectual property. But it's the people that will make the difference."

Ms Chan's philosophy on developing people is to give them room to grow. Aspiring individuals on the other hand must play by the "rules", which, in her opinions, are as simple as ABC:

- A: aim high, set targets, leave your comfort zone and produce quality work;
- B: balance work and life so as to maintain productivity and sustainability;
- C: change for the better.

She explains that everybody should have the courage to go further, break new ground and gear up for the next step. "You mature after about four years in the same position, and should expose yourself to new opportunities. Go the extra mile and don't become too comfortable in one place. You can expand your comfort zone if you are constantly ready for change," Ms Chan advises.

## China Opportunities



IT professionals in mainland China are more competitive and technically competent these days. "China is doing extremely well in the application development field, but Hong Kong still has the upper hand when it comes to project management, business analysis, solution architecture and integrated services. This is because customers here have gone through a longer learning

curve and they rely on local talent to offer sophisticated IT solutions in such areas," Ms Chan notes.

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